

PAST PRESENT Inspired by the home's original 1888 design by Holabird & Roche, the homeowners and Morgante Wilson Architects referenced archives in the Chicago History Museum to reconstruct some of the lost features, such as the attic's transom window. A wine barrel chandelier from Restoration Hardware suits the Old World-meets-modern vibe.



Relaxed LUXURY

With the help of designer Jodi Morton and Morgante Wilson Architects, a young family renovates a historic city mansion with punches of color and patterned floors to create an inviting backdrop for their forever home.

By Zlata Kozul Naumovski
Photography by Werner Straube

Graceland West—it may sound elegant and glamorous, yet the 6,000-square-foot single-family home on a spacious corner lot in one of Chicago's most desirable neighborhoods is anything but. And that's perfectly okay with the young family of six that resides there.

"The wife didn't want elegant or glamorous," explains Jodi Morton of 2to5 Design. "Those words are easy to throw around for a project this size, but that doesn't define her or her family." That isn't to say it came cheaply. There is a well-edited mix of investment pieces, but comfort prevails, with a "nothing is off-limits" vibe, says Morton.

With four children ranging in age from 2 to 9, who could blame the homeowners—a University of Chicago graduate turned stay-at-home mom and a technology company chief financial officer—for wanting to put down roots in the city they met in



MOODY HOLES Dark, moody, and a little bit mysterious, this dining room is a perfect blend of old and new. The table is a piece of local history, and the chairs are a classic design. The abstract painting is a work by a local artist, and the chandelier is a modern piece. The room is a perfect example of how to blend old and new.



WELL SUITED From top: Designer Jodi Marten says, "The parlor living room is comfortable, cool and eclectic. It really defines the homeowners' style." It also shows the home's mix of materials that creates the "nothing is off-limits" vibe they were looking for; the mud room bathroom features a custom vanity and apron sink. As Morgante Wilson Associate Principal John Potter says, "We were a great design team and, as you can see, it really shows in the house."

while attending the same university? "The whole vision was a comfy, cozy, welcoming, inviting space where we could relax and enjoy," says the wife. "We love the anonymity of the city and want to expose our kids to the culture."

The couple purchased their four-level Victorian home in Lakeview with trepidation, uncertain if they could handle the stress of an intense two-year renovation. Previously tastefully decorated by Chicago's very own Alessandra Branca with floral wallpaper and treated walls, the home lacked an open floor plan that was paramount to modern family living. It also was in dire need of more light and a new front door that didn't let in cold air.

Designed in 1888 by famous Chicago architects William Holabird and Martin Roche when Lakeview was a village surrounded by orchards and celery fields, the home was owned by the Sulzer family, one of the first families to settle in the area, and more recently by actress Joan Cusack. The new inhabitants discovered the donated archives at the Chicago History Museum and recreated some lost features, such as the big window with architectural detailing on the attic of the home. "We wanted to restore the window to the original picture we had seen, which had a much more beautiful exterior," notes the wife.

Enter Morgante Wilson Architects, who not only replaced two smaller windows with a single large one on the exterior of a child's attic bedroom, but also suggested adding arched windows in the massive kitchen.

"The round arch windows were added to the dormers to increase sunlight in the room and to open up the views to the sky and trees in the yard," explains Associate Principal John Potter. They also enhance the vaulted ceilings of the room and create a soft





"THE WIFE DIDN'T WANT ELEGANT OR GLAMOROUS. THOSE WORDS ARE EASY TO THROW AROUND FOR A PROJECT OF THIS SIZE, BUT THAT DOESN'T DEFINE HER OR HER FAMILY."

-JODI MORTON



playfulness against the angled dormers. Additionally, the firm restored the wood truss beams to complement the kitchen details.

One of the most exciting details in the kitchen is the backsplash made of handstenciled terracotta tiles with a Moorish inspired pattern. "We wanted something unexpected, not something you see everywhere," says the wife. The tiles add color, texture and depth to an otherwise white kitchen. Custom-made cabinets, appliances that the homeowner took a class to learn how to operate and an island of rustic wood with a Caesarstone countertop complete the space. Mixed metals in the form of brass lighting, iron hardware and a zinc hood keep things from looking monotone.

The newly opened-up first floor also contains a parlor living room softened by a Moroccan rug and a fireplace, a cozy dining room wrapped in dark walls and a family room anchored by a sectional in the most soothing shade of bluish-gray. Morgante Wilson Architects restored the original staircase on this level, then recreated it from the second to the third floor.

For the bathrooms, the wife sourced patterned tiles from Popham Design. "All of our bathrooms have fun floors," she says. One of her favorites is in her daughters' bathroom,

Rainbow-colored and octagon-shaped, they were one of the first design choices she made, and Morton enthusiastically supported her decision to "be bolder, use more color and not be so safe," she says.

In stark contrast to the muted palette of the master bedroom, not-so-safe color combinations can be found in the children's bedrooms too, particularly in a daughter's room where hot pink and turquoise energize the space. Additionally, cozy little sleeping nooks and built-in storage were created by taking advantage of every spare inch. "The kids' bedrooms are really special," the mother of four says.

And no fully functioning family home is ever really complete without a mudroom, tricked out with a sink for those dirty little hands and custom cabinets specified to the height of the family's boots.

Meanwhile, the backyard has all the trappings of a large suburban yard with an in-ground trampoline, a monkey-bar apparatus, a tire swing, a basketball hoop, a garden and plenty of room to play soccer. "We take a lot of pride in our place," the wife explains. "We appreciate that we are able to enjoy an indoor/outdoor lifestyle every hour of every day. We lived so long without a yard that to step outside and back inside is such a blessing." ■

ORDER IN THE HOUSE
Clockwise from left: A custom headboard by G&A Upholstery establishes the master bedroom's palette of soothing neutrals, while a piece by Chicago artist Dana De Ana hangs above it; a seating nook in the master bedroom is anchored by chairs from Jayson Home. The artwork is by Chicago artist Julie Meridian from her *Traces* series. Opposite page: Plenty of built-ins with customized shoe cabinets and designated cubbies in the mud room make for an organized back entry.



DESIGN DETAILS

TYPE
Single-family home

LOCATION
Lakeview

ARCHITECT
Morgante Wilson Architects
morgantewilson.com

INTERIORS
Jodi Morton, 2to5 Design
2to5design.com

BUILDER
Jarzab Construction
847.259.0699

MILLWORK
Neumann Custom Woodworking
neumanncustomwoodworking.com

RESOURCES
Ann Sacks
Concrete tiles
annsacks.com

Barbara's Design Studio
Custom window coverings
barbaradesignstudio.com

Circa Lighting
Lighting in kitchen, living room and master bedroom
circaighting.com

Design Within Reach
Lighting in dining room
dwr.com

G&A Upholstery
Custom upholstery of master bed and family room sofa
gnaupholstery.com

Hammer Design Inc.
Fabrication of custom dining table and nightstands
hammerdesigninc.com

Holland & Sherry
Galbraith & Paul wallpaper in powder room
hollandandsherry.com

Jayson Home
Living room sofa, coffee table and accessories throughout
jaysonhome.com

Oscar Isberian Rugs
Rugs in dining room, living room and basement
isberian.com

Quadrille
Wallpaper in daughter's room
quadrillefabrics.com

Restoration Hardware
Basement sofa and kitchen chandelier
restorationhardware.com

Waterworks
Lighting in master bath
waterworks.com